A Research Proposal

on

Employee Work Engagement : An Empirical Study Of Higher Education Sector In Punjab

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Introduction

"The key talent management challenge for Indian companies is how to keep workforces highly productive and at the same time, satisfied, engaged and committed."

Accenture Research Report, 2007.

All organizations envision the creation of an environment in which employees give their very best to the organization and stand by it during difficult times. In spite of earnestly wanting to achieve this state and investing resources to realize it, not many are able to win the desired commitment of employees.

Employee retention and contribution are critical business issues today and in the process of trying to produce more with fewer employees, companies have no choice but to try to engage not only the body but the mind and soul of every employee. SAS is the world's largest privately held software business with revenues of $2.3 billion, having an average employee tenure of 10 years; 300 employees who have worked 25 years or more, annual employee turnover being 2% in 2009, compared with the average in the software industry of about 22%. SAS has been on Fortune's list of best companies to work for, consecutively in the last 13 years and in 2009 it was in the top slot. What is the secret behind such enviable statistics? Could it have something to do with what Kahn (1990) termed as 'personal engagement' meaning thereby harnessing employees physical, cognitive and emotional selves in their work roles?

Engaging employees entails a closer examination of the unwritten, psychological contract between the employer and the employees which represents the mutual beliefs, perceptions, and informal obligations between them. It is distinguishable from the formal written contract of employment which only identifies mutual duties and responsibilities in a generalized form. For most part of the last century the deal was pretty clear. In return for their labor, the employees demanded a high degree of job security along with a slow and steady increase in remuneration. (Aselstine and Alletson , 2006).

The onset of the twenty first century has brought a paradigm shift in the psychological contract. Looking at the scenario from the employer's perspective, a typical employer is faced with the pressure to cut costs, use cutting edge technology to increase productivity and play against rivals trying to poach both: employees and customers. This is coupled with high employee attrition rates and corresponding lower average length of service, thus increasing the direct costs for replacement and decreasing the organization's ability to build long-term customer relationships and implement long-term strategies that are people-dependent. Besides, the mass lay-offs over the past decade have spurred a decline in the trust that employees previously held in their organizations further shaking the strength of the psychological contract.

Upon examining the employees' paradigm of the psychological contract it is evident that they now believe that one needs to change jobs more frequently to ensure continued salary growth and career advancement. The idea of a "job for life" is fading and current focus is upon creating "employability for future" anywhere across the globe. This raises a fundamental question as to whether work engagement depends on some factors in the work environment or in individuals? Furthermore the degree to which these factors would impact the extent of work engagement is a subject of enquiry.

1. Work engagement : the concept

The term 'employee engagement' has shown up in Workforce Magazine (2005), Harvard Business Review (2005) and the Washington Post (2005), not to mention the websites of many Human Resources consulting firms such as DDI (2005) and Towers Perrin (2003). The term coined by the Gallup Research group, seems to be attractive for at least two reasons. Employee engagement has been shown to have a statistical relationship with productivity, profitability, employee retention, safety, and customer satisfaction (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Coffman & Gonzalez-Molina, 2002). Similar relationships have not been shown for most traditional organizational constructs such as job satisfaction (Fisher & Locke, 1992). Employee engagement has become an

important topic, not only for academics and researchers but also for practitioners in organizations (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004).

As far as academic interest in work engagement is concerned, various factors contribute to it. Firstly, a qualitative study was conducted by Kahn (1990) to conceptualize personal engagement in work roles and to identify the psychological conditions and antecedents thereof. Based on the model of Kahn (1990), May *et al*. (2004) and Olivier and Rothmann (2007) tested structural models of employee engagement. Secondly, interest in engagement arose with the shift in focus in industrial psychology from weaknesses, malfunctioning and damage towards happiness, human strengths and optimal functioning i.e positive organizational behavior (Rothmann, 2003; Strumpfer, 2003). Peterson et al. (2005) regarded the study and promotion of happiness at work as an important goal and suggested three routes to happiness, namely pleasure, engagement and meaning. Thirdly, in the burnout literature (Maslach & Leiter, 1997), interest arose in engagement (energy, involvement and efficacy) as the direct opposite of burnout (exhaustion, cynicism and low professional efficacy). Lastly, research by Schaufeli et al. (2002) stimulated studies regarding employee engagement as the antipode of burnout, but a construct in its own right.

Before attempting to define the construct of work engagement it is important to understand what a construct really is. Schmitt & Klimoski (1991) define a construct as a concept that has been deliberately created or adopted for a scientific purpose. A construct cannot be observed; it must be inferred. For example, by observing a set of behaviors one might infer that a person possesses a particular construct, such as maturity. Merely attaching a name to a collection of survey items does not make it a construct. The measure must be validated by comparing and contrasting the construct to similar and different constructs to demonstrate that it is related to those constructs in theoretically predictable ways.

In order to gauge the construct validity of work engagement amongst employees the myriad of definitions that have been applied to it need to be examined. The following paragraphs present several such definitions cited according to similarity of content rather

than chronology. The definitions have been classified into three categories on the basis of the anchors or criteria used for defining the construct:

Criterion 1 : Work engagement defined in terms of already known constructs :

Some authors define engagement in terms of already known psychological constructs such as the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work (Harter, Schmidt and Hayes, 2002) ; a high internal motivational state (Colbert et al. , 2004). The term 'committed employees' has been used as a synonym for engaged employees by Fleming et al. (2005), Gallup Organization researchers. Gallup's Human Sigma website (2005) likens employee engagement to the concept of customer engagement, which has the dimensions of confidence, integrity, pride and passion.

In fact, it is this criterion of defining work engagement that lead to confusion in interpreting the concept and assigning different meanings to it. It also lead to an impression of putting old wine in a new bottle!

Criterion 2 : Work engagement defined in terms of its expected results or outcomes.

Work engagement has also been defined in terms of the results it is supposed to produce i.e. an illusive force that motivates employees to higher levels of performance. It has been termed as a coveted energy similar to commitment to the organization, job ownership and pride, more discretionary effort (time and energy), passion and excitement, commitment to execution and the bottom line. It has been considered an amalgam of commitment, loyalty, productivity and ownership (Wellins and Concelman , 2005). On similar lines, a recent study (2008) done in partnership between Business World and two Human Resource consulting firms – HR Anexi (a leading Indian human capital consulting firm with its HQ in Mumbai) and Blessing White (a global consulting firm based in Princeton, NJ, USA) define engagement in terms of their 'X' model which has two dimensions namely an individual's contribution to the company's success and personal satisfaction in the role. Full engagement represents an alignment of maximum job satisfaction ("I like my work and do it well") with maximum job contribution ("I help achieve the goals of my organization"). According to their study, engaged employees are

"enthused" and "in gear," using their talents and discretionary effort to make a difference in their employer's quest for sustainable business success.

Establishing a constructive critique of such definitions of employee engagement, Macey and Schneider (2008) pointed out that many HR consultants avoid defining the term, instead referring only to its presumed positive consequences.

Criterion 3: Work engagement defined in terms of characteristics of engaged employees.

Kahn (1990) conceptualized personal engagement as the harnessing of organization member's selves to their work roles: in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances. Thus, engaged employees put much effort into their work because they identify with it. According to Kahn (1990) a dynamic, dialectical relationship exists between the person who drives personal energies (physical, cognitive and emotional) into his or her work role on the one hand, and the work role that allows this person to express him or herself on the other hand.

Inspired by the work of Kahn (1990), Rothbard (2001) took a slightly different perspective and defined engagement as a two-dimensional motivational construct that includes attention (the cognitive availability and the amount of time one spends thinking about a role) and absorption (the intensity of one's focus on a role) .

On similar lines as Kahn (1990), Robinson et al. (2004) consider work engagement as a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values. They opine that an engaged employee is aware of the business context, works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. Engagement is a two-way relationship between employer and employee. It overlaps with commitment and organizational citizenship behavior, but it is two-way relationship and is "one step up" from commitment.

Interestingly, the most contemporary research on work engagement has been stimulated by research on burnout. Maslach and Leiter (1997) termed engagement as the positive antipode of burnout. They rephrased burnout as an erosion of engagement with the job. In the view of these authors, work engagement is characterised by energy, involvement and efficacy, which are considered the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions, namely exhaustion, cynicism and lack of professional efficacy respectively.

Schaufeli et al. (2002) partly agree with Maslach and Leiter's (1997) description, but take a different perspective and define work engagement in its own right. It is not plausible to expect that burnout and engagement are perfectly negatively correlated. That is, when an employee is not burned-out, this doesn't necessarily mean that one is engaged the work. Reversibly, when an employee is low on engagement, this does not mean that one is burned-out.

Hence, Schaufeli et al. (2002) consider that burnout and work engagement are two distinct concepts that should be assessed independently. This means that, at least theoretically, an employee who is not burned-out may score high or low on engagement, whereas an engaged employee may score high or low on burnout. Furthermore, burnout and engagement may be considered on two independent dimensions of activation and identification. Activation ranges from exhaustion to vigour, while identification range from cynicism to dedication. Burnout is characterised by a combination of exhaustion (low activation) and cynicism (low identification), whereas engagement is characterised by vigour (high activation) and dedication (high identification).

Schaufeli et al. (2002) define engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behaviour. It consists of three dimensions namely :

i. Vigour - characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, not being easily fatigued, and persistence even in the face of difficulties.

ii. Dedication- characterised by deriving a sense of significance from one's work, by feeling enthusiastic and proud about one's job, and by feeling inspired and challenged by it.

iii. Absorption - characterised by being totally and happily immersed in one's work and having difficulties detaching oneself from it. Time passes quickly and one forgets everything else that is around.

In later years engagement has been defined as how each individual employee connects with the organization and with customers (Lucey and Hines, 2005) ; the extent to which people value, enjoy and believe in what they do (DDI, 2005). Erickson (2005) articulated a view that engagement is above and beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement or basic loyalty to the employer. Engagement, in contrast, is about passion and commitment—the willingness to invest oneself and expend one's discretionary effort to help the employer succeed.

Macey and Schneider (2008) distinguished three broad conceptualizations of employee engagement, namely state, trait, and behavioral engagement. State engagement can be defined from two perspectives, namely engagement as an extension of the self to a role (Kahn, 1990), and employees' work activities as a reference for engagement (Bakker et al., 2008; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

After a review of the meaning of engagement as explained by various authors the following analysis has been done :

I. The definitions falling in the last category i.e based on characteristics of engaged employees are the most lucid interpretations of the concept.

II. Although the definition and meaning of engagement in the practitioner literature often overlaps with other constructs, in the academic literature it has been defined as a distinct and unique construct.

III. When viewed holistically the multiple definitions seem to be complimentary and it can be said that :

a. Work Engagement comprises three dimensions, namely a physical component (being physically involved in a task and showing vigour), a cognitive component

(being alert at work and experiencing absorption and involvement), and an emotional component (being connected to one's job/others while working and showing dedication).

b. Work engaged employees possess unique stress coping mechanisms (resilience) ; a strong identification with their work which enables them to go the extra mile (extra-role performance).
c. Work engagement is a two way process controlled by both the personal characteristics of an individual and by the work environment.

2. Work Engagement : a unique construct

The question remains as to whether engagement is a unique concept or merely a repackaging of other constructs—what Kelley (1927; quoted in Lubinski, 2004, p. 98) called the ''Jangle Fallacy.'' In this context, Macey, W.H and Schneider, B. (2008) in their exploration of the meaning of work engagement explain that as a psychological state it has embraced one or more of several related ideas, representing some form of absorption, attachment, and/or enthusiasm. Operationally, the measures of engagement have been composed of a potpourri of items representing one or more of the four different categories: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job involvement and workaholism. So it is important to compare work engagement with each one of these constructs and clarify their meaning individually :

3.1 Engagement and satisfaction

Job satisfaction, a widely researched construct, is defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Locke & Henne, 1986). Although there may be room for satisfaction within the engagement construct, engagement connotes activation, whereas satisfaction connotes satiation (Erickson, 2005). In addition, although ''satisfaction'' surveys that ask employees to describe their work conditions may be relevant for assessing the conditions that provide for engagement (state and/or behavioral), they do not directly tap engagement.

3.2 Engagement and organizational commitment

Organizational commitment is the degree to which an individual identifies with an organization and is committed to its goals. In the engagement literature, several of the authors use terms such as commitment (Fleming, et al., 2005), an amalgam of commitment, loyalty, productivity and ownership (Wellins & Concelman, 2005). The Corporate Executive Board (2004) suggested that engagement is the extent to which employees commit to someone or something in their organization, how hard they work, and how long they stay as a result of that commitment. Hence it can be concluded that organizational commitment is an important facet of the state of engagement when it is conceptualized as positive attachment to the larger organizational entity and measured as a willingness to exert energy in support of the organization, to feel pride as an organizational member, and to have personal identification with the organization. In no case does engagement totally overlap with commitment. Hence, the construct of engagement has more to it than mere commitment.

3.3 Engagement and workaholism

The term "workaholism" was coined by Oates (1971), who describes it as the compulsion or the uncontrollable need to work incessantly. Hence, workaholics tend to allocate an exceptional amount of time to work and persistently think about work, even when not working, which suggests that workaholics are "obsessed" with their work. Starkly opposite to these characteristics, the behavior of engaged employees shows that are *not* addicted to work (Schaufeli et al.,2001). Unlike workaholics, they enjoy doing things outside work, they do not feel guilty when not working, and they do not work hard because of a strong and irresistible inner drive but because for them work is fun.

Hence it can be concluded that the construct of work engagement relates to other well known constructs as discussed above but is not the same. It is a unique construct, having its own measurement criteria.

3. Review of Literature

The purpose of the current review of literature is to give a state-of-the art overview of research done in the domain of work engagement. So, for the purpose of conceptual clarity all the studies reviewed have been classified as under :

4.1 Studies on behavioural manifestations of work engagement

4.2 Studies on measurement of work engagement

4.3 Studies on the engagement – performance link

4.4 Studies on the crossover of work engagement

4.5 Studies focused on model building

4.6 Studies on the negative side of work engagement

Here is a brief account of studies in all these categories :

4.1 Studies on behavioural manifestations of work engagement

Do the work engaged employees possess any distinguished behavioral manifestations? This question has been answered by Schaufeli *et al.*(2001). They conducted structured qualitative interviews with a heterogeneous group of Dutch employees who scored high on the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. It was revealed that (a) engaged employees are highly energetic, self-efficacious individuals who exercise influence over events that affect their lives (for example, they changed jobs once they were no longer challenged and found meaning in other organizations or occupations). (b) engaged employees create their own positive feedback, in terms of appreciation, recognition, and success because of their positive attitude and activity level. (c) Their enthusiasm and energy also appears outside work, e.g. in sports, creative hobbies, and volunteer work. However, engaged employees are no supermen – they do feel tired after a long day of hard work but, they describe their tiredness as a rather pleasant state because it is associated with positive accomplishments. (d) Finally, engaged employees are not addicted to their work. Unlike workaholics, they do not work hard because of a strong and irresistible inner drive, but because for them working is fun.

On similar lines the results of Engelbrecht's (2006) qualitative research among Danish midwives add significantly to these findings by showing how engagement translates into behavior. Engelbrecht asked participants to describe a highly engaged colleague. The interviews revealed that (a) an engaged employee radiates energy and keeps up the spirit especially in situations where work morale is low and frustration spreads; (b) an engaged employee is ready to do whatever needs to be done and is seen as a source of inspiration for herself and others. The love (for her job) is expressed through the passion with which she fulfils her daily tasks. In addition to the normal tasks, she is also engaged in other job-related but voluntary activities.

On the whole it can be said that the behavioral characteristics of engaged workers reflect numerous facets simultaneously viz. organizational citizenship behavior, role expansion, proactive behavior, and demonstrating personal initiative, all strategically focused in service of organizational objectives. Many of the facets of behavioral engagement contain the notion of going beyond the usual or typical; performance that is adaptive and innovative.

4.2. **Studies on measurement of work engagement**

Another important question addressed through the review of literature is an exploration of the instruments available for measurement of work engagement**.** Measurement of any phenomenon is vital for framing any policy aimed at increasing its level or spread.

Some consulting firms have developed their own instruments to measure employee engagement the most prominent and popular is Gallup Organization. **T**he first issue related to their measurement instrument is regarding how many items are there in the Gallup survey and what is the Gallup survey called? Buckingham and Coffman (1999) simply refer to the survey items as the twelve questions (even though in their appendix they refer to 13 items). In the appendix they refer to four theoretical constructs that the items measure, What do I get? What do I give? Do I belong? and How can we grow? Coffman and Gonzalez-Molina (2002) call the survey the Q12 and consider each of the items a "condition". Harter, et al. (2002) report using a 13-item scale, the 12 Gallup

questions, which they refer to as the Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA), and a one-item overall job satisfaction item. They state that the GWA reflects two sets of items: attitudinal outcomes and antecedents to those attitudes that are within a manager's control. The Gallup webpage calls the survey the Q12. Lucey et al. (2005) refer to the Gallup Engagement Index, which consists of the same 12 questions as the GWA. The Gallup organization needs to decide on a name for their instrument and use that name consistently (Little B. and Little P., 2006).

Maslach and Leiter (1997) consider work engagement to be characterised by energy, involvement and efficacy, the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions, namely exhaustion, cynicism and lack of professional efficacy respectively. Therefore, they assess work engagement by the opposite pattern of scores on the three dimensions of Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) – low scores on exhaustion and cynicism, and high scores on efficacy are indicative for engagement.

An alternative instrument for the assessment of work engagement is the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) (Demerouti and Bakker , 2007). This instrument was developed originally to assess burnout, but includes both positively and negatively phrased items, and hence it can be used to assess work engagement as well . Researchers interested in assessing work engagement with the OLBI may recode the negatively framed items. The OLBI includes two dimensions: one ranging from exhaustion to vigour and a second ranging from cynicism (disengagement) to dedication. The reliability and factorial validity of the OLBI has been confirmed in studies conducted in Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, the USA, and South Africa.

The most often used instrument to measure engagement is Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002), a self-reporting instrument that has been validated in many countries across the world including China (Yi-Wen and Yi-Qun, 2005), Finland (Hakanen, 2002), South Africa (Storm and Rothmann, 2003), Spain (Schaufeli et al., 2002), and The Netherlands (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

UWES includes 15 items for the assessment of the three engagement dimensions including vigor, dedication and absorption. Schaufeli et al. (2006) subsequently developed a shorted nine-item version of the UWES and provided evidence for its cross-national validity. Both the scales are relevant in investigating work engagement status.

UWES has quite satisfactory psychometric properties:

1. The three subscales are internally consistent and stable across time.
2. The three-factor structure is confirmed, and seems to be invariant across samples from different countries.

It seems that the UWES is a valid and reliable indicator of work engagement that can be used for future research. (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2002).

4.3 Studies on the engagement – performance link

The study of work engagement would not be complete till the engagement – performance link is thoroughly investigated. Bakker et al. (2008) mention four reasons why engaged workers perform better than non engaged workers. Engaged employees: (1) often experience positive emotions, including happiness, joy, and enthusiasm; (2) experience better psychological and physical health; (3) create their own job and personal resources (e.g., support from others); and (4) transfer their engagement to others. Whereas positive emotions broaden people's thought-action repertoire (Fredrickson, 2003), good health facilitates performance because individuals can use all their mental and physical resources (skills, abilities, knowledge, etc.). Further, employees who create their own resources are better able to deal with their job demands and to achieve their work goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Finally, in most organizations performance is the result of the combined effort of individual employees. It is therefore conceivable that the crossover of engagement among members of the same work team increases performance.

Only a few studies have examined the relationship between work engagement and job performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Nevertheless, the results obtained so far look promising. Bakker, Demerouti, and Verbeke (2004) showed that engaged employees received higher ratings from their colleagues on in-role and extra-role performance, indicating that engaged employees perform well and are willing to go the extra mile. Gierveld and Bakker (2005) found that engaged secretaries scored higher on in-role and

extra-role performance and had more influence on daily business. They were more often asked to carry out additional tasks, including personnel pre-selection, the organization of trade exhibitions and conventions, and website maintenance. Salanova et al. (2005) conducted an important study among personnel working in Spanish restaurants and hotels. Contact employees from over 100 service units (hotel front desks and restaurants) provided information about organizational resources, engagement, and service climate. Furthermore, customers from these units provided information on employee performance and customer loyalty. Structural equation modeling analyses were consistent with a full mediation model in which organizational resources and work engagement predicted service climate, which in turn predicted employee performance and then customer loyalty.

Bakker et al. (2006) conducted a study on engagement and performance among 105 school principals and 232 teachers. Their study showed significant and positive associations between school principals' work engagement scores and teacher-ratings of school principals' performance and leadership. In addition, engagement was strongly related to creativity; the higher school principals' levels of work engagement, the better they were able to come up with a variety of ways to deal with work-related problems. Finally, engaged school principals were seen as transformational leaders – being able to inspire, stimulate and coach their co-workers.

Xanthopoulou et al. (2007a) made a compelling case of the predictive value of work engagement for performance, on a daily basis on the basis of their study among Greek employees working in a fast-food restaurant. Results showed that employees were more engaged on days that were characterized by many job resources. Daily job resources, like supervisor coaching and team atmosphere contributed to employees' personal resources (day-levels of optimism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem), which, in turn, explained daily engagement. Importantly, this study clearly showed that engaged employees perform better on a daily basis.

Employee engagement is a lead indicator of high tenures and productivity. Engagement practices such as job design, commitment to employees, work life balance, transparent appraisal, opportunities for continuous learning and engagement evaluation

systems constitute a category of internal processes that predict organizational performance (Gopal, 2010).

We can conclude that research supports the link between work engagement and performance. Employees who feel vital and strong, are enthusiastic about their work, show better in-role and extra-role performance. As a consequence, engaged workers realize better financial results, and have more satisfied clients and customers.

4.4 Studies on the crossover of work engagement

Crossover or emotional contagion can be defined as the transfer of positive (or negative) experiences from one person to the other (Westman, 2001). Barsade (2002) conducted an innovative laboratory study in which the transfer of moods among people in a group and its influence on performance was examined. Using a trained confederate enacting mood, she showed that the pleasant mood of the confederate influenced the mood of the other team members during a simulated managerial exercise (leaderless group discussion). The positive mood contagion consequently resulted in more cooperative behaviour and better task performance. In a similar vein, Sy et al. (2005) found that when leaders were in a positive (vs. negative) mood, individual team members experienced more positive and less negative mood. The researchers also found that groups with leaders in a positive mood exhibited more coordination and expended less effort than did groups with leaders in a negative mood.

In another experiment, Damen (2007) showed that those who were exposed to engaged leaders were more effective and produced more. One of the reasons for this is that the emotions of the leader conveyed action readiness. In addition, the effect only worked when followers' emotions were similarly positive, suggesting that a contagion effect may have been responsible for the enthusiasm – performance link (Barsade, 2002).

Engaged workers who communicate their optimism, positive attitudes and pro-active behaviors to their colleagues, create a positive team climate, independent of the demands and resources they were exposed to (Bakker et al., 2006). The authors also discovered that team engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption) partly countered

individual members' experience of strain. Hence it can be said that both engagement as well as the lack of it is contagious.

Furthermore, it appears that employee's who take the positive feelings from their work home or who – vice versa – take the positive experiences at home to their work exhibit higher levels of engagement compared to those where there is no positive cross-over between the two different domains (Montgomery et al., 2003). Finally, in a study among working couples it was shown that wives' levels of vigor and dedication uniquely contribute to husbands' levels of vigor and dedication, respectively, even when controlled for several work and home demands (Bakker et al. , 2003). The same applies to husband's levels of engagement that are likewise influenced by their wives' levels of engagement. This means that engagement crosses over from one partner to the other, and vice versa.

4.5 Studies focused on model building

This category includes studies that aimed at explaining the dynamics of work engagement by identifying its antecedents and consequences. Four distinct engagement models have been identified viz. Kahn (1990), followed by Saks (2006) , Bakker and Demeroutti (2008) and Macey and Schneider (2008).

According to Kahn (1990), people can use varying degrees of their selves, physically, cognitively, and emotionally, in the work they perform. It seems that the more people draw on their selves to perform their roles the more stirring their performances. The individuals who are engaged become physically involved in tasks, are cognitively vigilant, and become connected to others in the service of work they are doing (Kahn, 1990).

The idea behind Kahn's theory of personal engagement (Kahn, 1990) relates to the identification of three psychological conditions that impact on an individual's engagement, namely psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety and psychological availability.

Psychological meaningfulness refers to the value of a work goal in relation to the ideals of an individual (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). A lack of meaning in work can lead to apathy and detachment from one's work (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) and disengagement (May *et al*., 2004). The studies of May *et al*. (2004) and Olivier and Rothmann (2007) confirmed that psychological meaningfulness is a strong predictor of employee engagement.

Psychological safety entails being able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career (Kahn, 1990). Psychological safety might lead to engagement, because it reflects one's belief that a person can employ themselves without fear of negative consequences. The opposite would occur in a work environment that is ambiguous, unpredictable and threatening. Employees in unsafe environments are likely to disengage from the work, and would be more cautious to try new things.

Psychological availability can be defined as the sense of having the physical, emotional or psychological resources to engage at a particular moment. It indicates whether the individual is ready and/or confident to engage in their work role given the fact that people are also engaged in many other life activities. Factors such as the individual's resources or work role insecurities might influence an individual's beliefs, which might have a direct influence on their psychological availability.

In the only study to empirically test Kahn's (1990) model, May et al. (2004) found that meaningfulness, safety, and availability were significantly related to engagement. They also found that job enrichment and role fit were positive predictors of meaningfulness; rewarding co-worker and supportive supervisor relations were positive predictors of safety while adherence to co-worker norms and self-consciousness were negative predictors; and resources available was a positive predictor of psychological availability while participation in outside activities was a negative predictor.

Building on the foundation laid by Kahn (1990), Saks (2006) tested a model of the antecedents and consequences of job and organization engagements. This was the first

study to make a distinction between job and organization engagement. As a result, this study addressed concerns about that lack of academic research on employee engagement.

Although Kahn's (1990) model indicates the psychological conditions or antecedents that are necessary for engagement, it does not fully explain why individuals possess varying degrees of engagement. Saks (2006) found a strong theoretical rationale for the same in social exchange theory (SET). A basic tenet of SET is that relationships evolve over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments as long as the parties abide by certain "rules" of exchange (Cropanzano and Mictchell, 2005). Rules of exchange usually involve reciprocity or repayment rules such that the actions of one party lead to a response or actions by the other party. For example, when individuals receive economic and socioemotional resources from their organization, they feel obliged to respond in kind and repay the organization (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

The results of Saks (2006) study demonstrated that job and organization engagements are related but distinct constructs. Participants' scores were significantly higher for job engagement compared to organization engagement. In addition, it was found that that neither the psychological conditions that lead to job and organization engagements are the same nor the consequences of both types of engagement are the same.

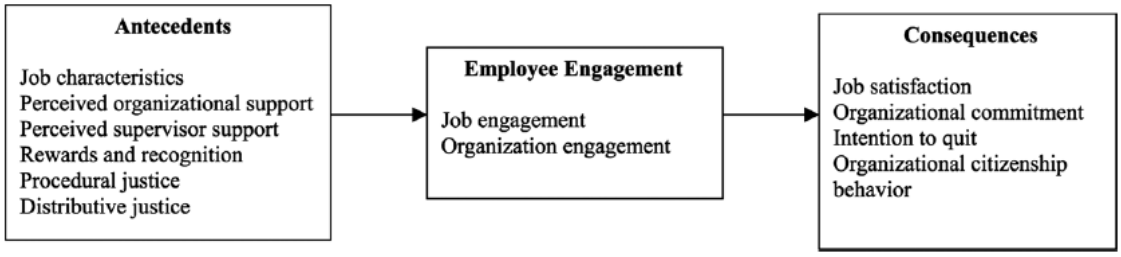


Figure 1 : A model of the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement
*Source : Saks, A.M. (2006), "Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement", Journal of Managerial Psychology , Vol. 21 No. 7, pp. 600-***619**

The results of Saks' (2006) study suggest that employee engagement is a meaningful construct that is worthy of future research. There are several avenues to consider. One area would be to investigate other potential predictors of job and organization engagement. This study included a number of factors associated with Kahn's (1990, 1992) and Maslach et al.'s (2001) engagement models. However, there are other variables that might also be important for both job and organization engagement.

In the quest of a lucid framework for explaining the dynamics of work engagement, Bakker and Demeroutti (2008) proposed the Job Demands and Resources (JD-R) Model. It is based on the definition of work engagement given by Schaufeli et al. (2002) cited earlier. This model gives a framework of the antecedents and consequences of work engagement (refer fig.2). Empirical studies that have lead to this model established that work engagement is primarily driven by two sets of variables viz. job resources (such as social support from colleagues and supervisors, performance feedback, skill variety, autonomy) and personal resources (such as self-efficacy, organization-based self-esteem, optimism and resilience). The effect of work engagement is visible in performance be it in-role, extra-role, creativity or financial turnover of the organization as a whole.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found evidence for a positive relationship between three job resources (performance feedback, social support, and supervisory coaching) and work engagement (vigor, dedication and absorption) among four different samples of Dutch employees. They showed that job resources (not job demands) exclusively predicted engagement, and that engagement is a mediator of the relationship between job resources and turnover intentions. This study was replicated in a sample of over 2000 Finnish teachers (Hakanen et al., 2006). Results showed that job control, information, supervisory support, innovative climate and social climate were all positively related to work engagement.

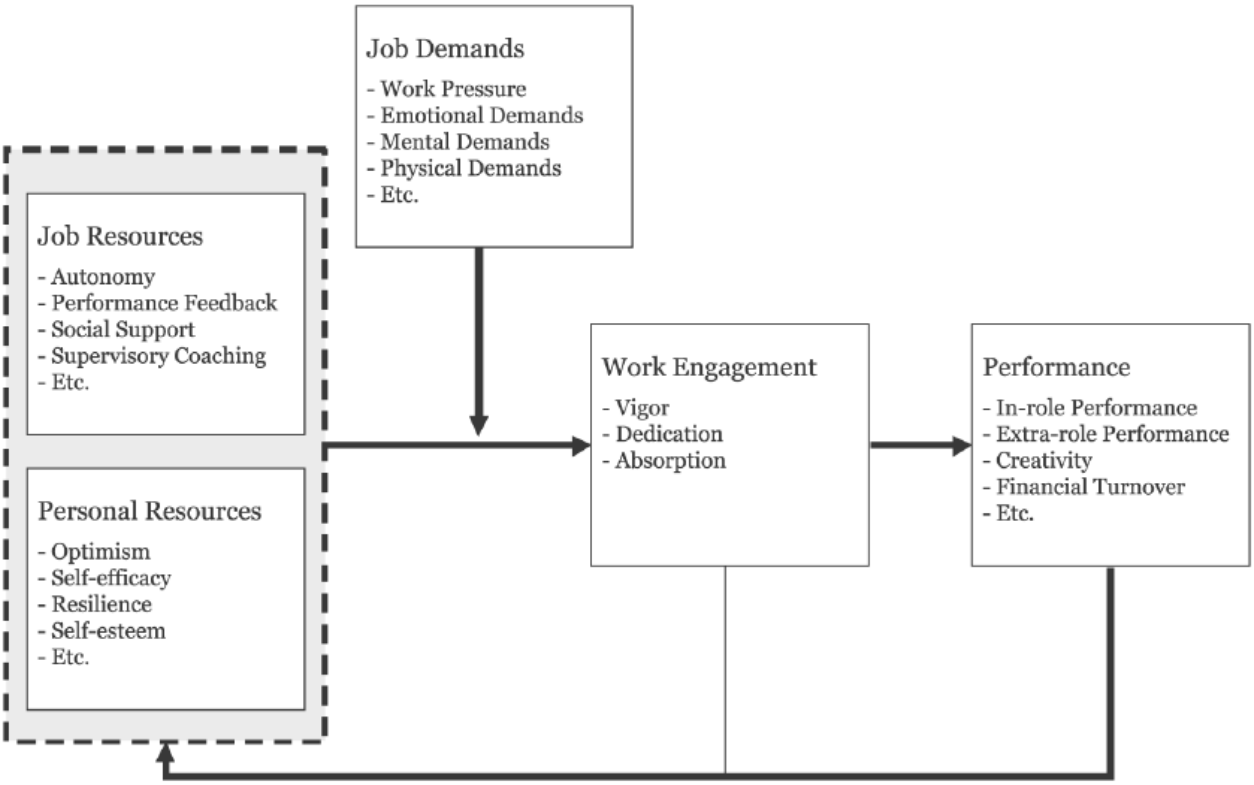
Work life experiences, particularly control, rewards and recognition and value fit, were significant predictors of engagement (Koyuncu et al., 2006). Mauno et al. (2007) utilized a two-year longitudinal design to investigate work engagement and its

antecedents among Finnish health care personnel. Job resources predicted work engagement better than did job demands. Job control and organization-based self-esteem proved to be the best predictors of work engagement. Schaufeli et al. (2008) found that changes in job resources were predictive of engagement over a period of one year.

Many research studies lead to the conclusion that in addition to job resources, personal resources also have a major role to play in determining the level of work engagement. Bakker et al. (2006) in their study among female school principals found that those with most personal resources scored highest on work engagement. Rothmann and Storm (2003) conducted a large cross-sectional study among 1,910 South African police officers and found that engaged police-officers are problem-focused, taking active steps to attempt to remove or rearrange stressors. Studies done by Xanthopoulou et al. (2007b) revealed that engaged employees are highly self-efficacious, optimistic and believe they can satisfy their needs by participating in roles within the organization.

In short, engaged workers possess personal resources, including optimism, self-efficacy, self-esteem, resilience, and an active coping style, that help them to control and impact upon their work environment successfully and to achieve career success (Luthans et al., 2008).

On the whole it can be said that Bakker and Demeroutti (2008) successfully identified the antecedents and consequences of work engagement on the basis of empirical evidence.



Source: Based on Bakker & Demerouti (2007)

Fig. 2 : Bakker and Demeroutti's JD-R Model of work engagement (2008)

Another distinct framework of employee engagement has been proposed by Macey and Schneider (2008). **A**n analysis of this framework (refer Fig. 3) reveals that employee engagement can be perceived as having three inter-related elements viz. trait engagement (possession of such personality traits that create an inclination to be engaged in one's work), state engagement (a psychological state of being engaged in one's work) and behavioural engagement (depiction of unique in-role and extra role performance). Factors influencing all three elements of engagement directly or indirectly have been identified.

Explaining the relationship between the elements of enagagement, Macey and Schneider established that trait engagement gets reflected in psychological state engagement which gets manifested as behavioral engagement.

As far as factors affecting work engagement are concerned, the nature of work (e.g., challenge, variety) and the nature of leadership (especially transformational leadership) were of particular interest to Macey and Scheneider.

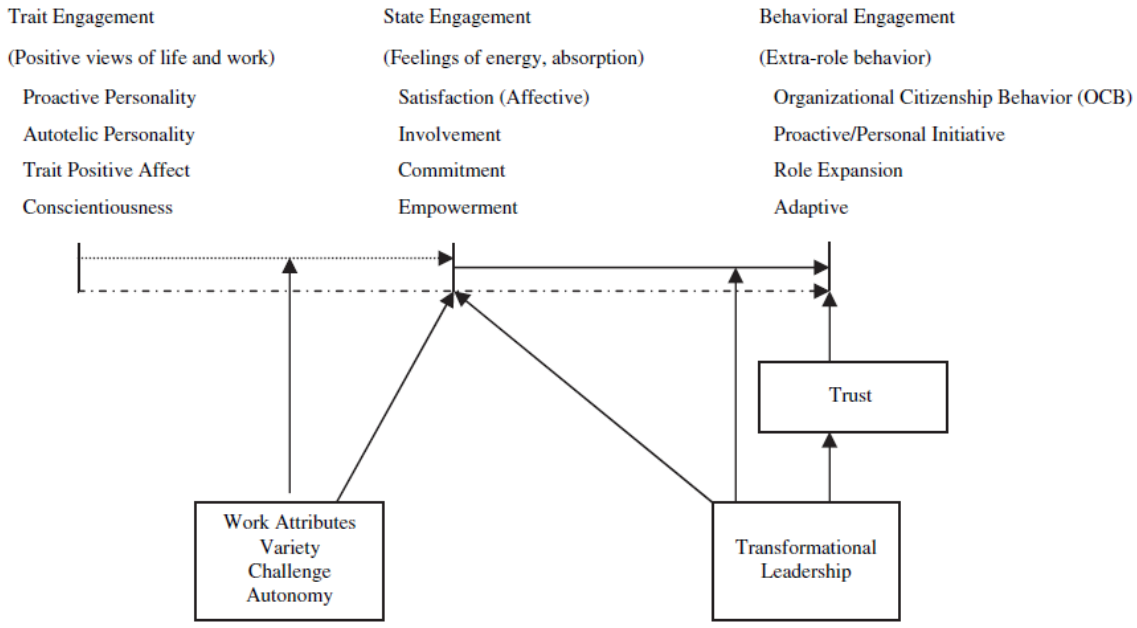


Figure 3 : Framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement

Source : Macey, W.H. and Schneider, B. (2008) , "The Meaning of Employee Engagement", Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Vol. 1, pp. 3–30.

Thus, Macey and Schneider (2008) tried to solve the conceptual confusion by proposing employee engagement as an all-inclusive umbrella term that contains different types of engagement (i.e., trait engagement, state engagement, and behavioural engagement). They do not choose a specific conceptualization of engagement as ''right'' or ''true'' because (a) this would not be useful at this early stage in the development of thinking about engagement; (b) any or all of these conceptualizations can be useful for specific purposes; and (c) identifying these different conceptualizations will help researchers and practitioners have a firmer idea about the locus of the issue when they work with it. They established the foundation for future research.

A closer examination of the four models of engagement proposed by Kahn (1990), Saks (2006), Bakker and Demerouti (2008) and Macey and Schneider (2008) a summarized comparison of all the models has been made for understanding the state of the art :

Models → Parameters ↓	**Kahn (1990)**	**Saks (2006)**	**Bakker and Demeroutti (2008)**	**Macey and Schneider (2008)**
Terms used	Personal Engagement	Employee engagement	Work engagement	Employee engagement
Dimensions	Physical, cognitive and affective	Job engagement and organizational engagement	Vigour (physical and mental) , dedication (affective) and absorption (cognitive)	Trait , state and behavioural engagement
Antecedent (1)	Psychological meaningfulness (predicted by job enrichment and role fit)	job characteristics	job resources	work attributes
Antecedent (2)	Psychological safety (predicted by rewarding co-worker and supportive supervisor relations)	Perceived Supervisory support and perceived organizational support	supervisory coaching and social support	Transformational leadership and trust
Antecedent (3)	Psychological availability (predicted by individual resources and work-role insecurities)	Organizational factors such as rewards, distributive and procedural justice	Personal resources (optimism, self efficacy, resilience, self esteem)	Trait engagement (personality traits - proactive, conscientious)
Consequences (1)	Individual performance	Job satisfaction	In- role performance	Proactive behavior / initiative
Consequences (2)		Organization commitment	Extra- role performance	Role expansion
Consequences (3)		Organization citizenship behavior	Creativity	Organization citizenship behavior
Consequences (4)		Intention to quit	Financial turnover	Adaptive
Unique feature	Pioneer model - referred to in other models. Formed a sound base for later studies.	Organization engagement distinct from job engagement and more powerful in predicting outcome variables	Job resources, job demands and personal resources as the main antecedents of work engagement	Engagement established as a unique construct different from job satisfaction, organization commitment, job involvement,

				workaholism etc.

Hence it can be concluded that all the models have many aspects in common. Even the dissimilar aspects are complimentary to each other rather than contradictory. Future research can assimilate all the known models so far and frame a more holistic model clarifying the engagement dynamics.

4.6 Studies on the negative side of work engagement

It is said that excess of everything is bad. Could this be the case with work engagement too? In other words, does work engagement have its the flip side too?
This question can be answered after paying attention to a few common observations : high self-esteem can lead to an underestimation of the time that is necessary for goal achievement (Buehler, Griffin & Ross, 1994); unrealistic optimism can harm individuals and organizations by promoting inappropriate persistence (Armor & Taylor, 1998); overconfidence hinders subsequent performance (Vancouver et al., 2001; Vancouver et al., 2002); creativity may lead to frustration due to unfocused effort and diminished productivity (Ford & Sullivan, 2004). Since many of these positive sounding qualities (e.g., self-confidence, optimism, creativity) have been identified as potential predictors of work engagement, it seems evident that "over-engagement" can also have negative consequences.

Bakker et al. (2004) conducted a survey-study among a representative sample of the Dutch workforce and found that work engagement was positively related to working overtime. Although engaged employees are not workaholics, they may become so engaged in their work that they take work home. The work-life balance literature has shown that work-home interference undermines recovery from stress and may lead to health problems (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003). Particularly the absorption component of work engagement seems a conceivable link for evoking unhealthy behavior. Pines et al. (1981) beautifully point out which type of employees are more vulnerable in falling in the 'over engagement trap'. They very rightly said that in order to burn out, a person needs to have been on fire at one time. Employees who are so immersed in their work that they forget to rest and recover, may develop health problems, disturb their work-life harmony

and fall into the trap of 'presenteeism' or 'workaholism'. Thus it can be said that there is a thin line between engagement and over-engagement – crossing which one does more harm than good to oneself as well as the larger system. The definition of this line varies from person to person and an enlightened individual is the best judge of what is the right level of work engagement at any given point of time in life.

4. The Research Gaps

Since work engagement has not been a domain of academic research for very long, there are a few research gaps which need to be covered for understanding this construct still better and applying it for sustainable success. Bakker and Leiter (2010) proposed seven avenues for research that seem highly relevant for further progress in this emerging field:

5.1 Conceptual development

Further progress in research on work engagement would be more effective with broad agreement on the meaning of the concept. Bakker and Leiter (2010) propose to define work engagement as a subjective experience with two core dimensions: energy and involvement/ identification. The inclusion of both dimensions within the UWES (Schaufeli et al., 2002), the MBI (Maslach et al. , 1996), and the OLBI (Demerouti & Bakker, 2008) supports that perspective. Research could consider the absorption dimension of the UWES that its developers proposed as a core aspect of work engagement, but may on closer examination appear as an outcome of energy and identification.

Another important conceptual question is the role of professional efficacy included in the MBI. It may be more constructive to view efficacy as a personal resource contributing to work engagement rather than as a core dimension of engagement. Resolving these questions requires further development in theory and measurement.

5.2 Daily work engagement

Most of the studies on work engagement have used a between-person design and cannot explain why even highly engaged employees may have an off day and sometimes show below average or poor performance. Researchers have therefore begun to examine

daily changes in work engagement using diary studies. An important advantage of diary research is that it relies less on retrospective recall than regular surveys, since the questions relate to individuals' perceptions and feelings on a certain day. Diary research may also reveal the day-to-day triggers of state engagement.

5.3 Engagement and Job crafting

Employees do not just let life happen to them. Rather, they try to affect what happens in their lives. (Grant and Ashford, (2008) . Employees may actively change the design of their jobs by choosing tasks, negotiating different job content, and assigning meaning to their tasks or jobs (Parker & Ohly, 2008). Particularly, engaged employees behave in such a way. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) call the process of employees shaping their own jobs "job crafting"; this includes the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in their tasks or relational boundaries. Physical changes refer to the form, scope or number of job tasks, whereas cognitive changes refer to perception of the job. Relational boundaries include employees' discretion over their social interactions while doing the job. Job crafting has the potential to improve employees' balance of job demands with resources, increasing their person–job fit. Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) suggest that employees who view their work as a calling (i.e., focus on enjoyment or fulfillment) are more likely to engage in job crafting, because work is more central to their lives. It would be interesting to examine the strategies employees use to increase their work engagement. Are engaged workers better able to mobilize their job resources? Do they search actively for feedback about their performance? Studies on engagement and job crafting may answer the question whether engaged employees really create virtuous circles.

5.4 Is there a dark side of engagement?

It seems evident that "over-engagement" can also have negative consequences. For example, although engaged employees are not workaholics, they may become so engaged in their work that they take work home. The design of future research should include ways of assessing potential long-term negative effects of high work engagement. The absorption component of work engagement seems a likely candidate for evoking

unhealthy behavior. Employees may become so immersed in their work that they forget to rest or to maintain their personal relationships.

5.5 Engagement and health

To date, only a handful of studies have addressed the relationship between work engagement and health. Demerouti et al. (2001) found moderate negative correlations between engagement (particularly vigor) and psychosomatic health complaints (e.g., headaches, chest pain). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found that engaged workers suffer less from self-reported headaches, cardiovascular problems, and stomach aches. Similarly, Hakanen et al. (2006), in their study among Finnish teachers, showed that work engagement was positively related to self-rated health and workability. What is needed is sensitive in-depth research on the psychophysiological indicators of engagement, as well as longitudinal studies on the relationship between engagement and health. In addition, Rothmann and Rothmann (2010) point out that research is needed on interventions that will be effective in preventing distress and burnout in engaged employees.

5.6 Crossover of engagement

Future studies in work engagement may focus on the crossover of engagement and performance in real-life work settings. The question remains whether such a crossover of work engagement also translates into better team performance. Future studies should further illuminate the processes fostering the crossover of engagement at the workplace.

5.7 Management Intervention

Intervention studies hold the greatest potential for theory, research, and practice. Intervention studies provide a conceptual richness. They target a specific quality of the work environment, first to determine its susceptibility to change and secondly to assess the consequences of those changes on other aspects of work life. Viewed from a practical perspective, intervention studies are useful.

On the whole it can be said that research on work engagement has broad and profound implications for organizations in the 21st century. A focus on work engagement can offer huge competitive advantage.

Literature reveals that the most popular target segment for the studies on work engagement have been the service sector employees – whether they were the South African police officers (Rothmann and Storm, 2003), Finnish Dentistis (Hakanen et.al , 2005), Finnish teachers (Hakanen et al., 2006), female school principals (Bakker et al., 2006), Finnish health care personnel (Mauno et al., 2007), Dutch telecom company (Schaufeli et al. 2008), flight attendants (Xanthopoulou et al., 2008) or fast-food restaurant employees (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009).

It is noteworthy that all the studies cited in the review have been done outside India, so far. Hence, the present study seeks to address some of the research gaps by attempting an investigation of work engagement in Indian organizations. The higher education sector has been specifically chosen for the present study as it is a sunrise sector having huge employment potential. Employees in the higher education sector shoulder the vital responsibility of mentoring India's youth and making them 'ready' as professionals and citizens of the 21st century.

Like any other economic sector, the higher education sector is also driven by intense, global competition, which requires the employees (especially the teachers) to be emotionally and cognitively committed to their institution and their work. The higher education system in India has grown in a remarkable way, particularly in the post-independence period, to become one of the largest system of its kind in the world. India is now engaged in the use of higher education as a powerful tool to build a knowledge-based information society of the 21st century.

In the current scenario, Indian higher education sector faces certain challenges and needs reforms. This is eminent in face of the extraordinary haste with which dozens of new institutions have been created, the controversies over corruption in the accreditation processes, the growing pressure for creation of private institutions of higher learning, the

challenges posed by the impending entry of foreign institutions and the growing realization that the best of India's institutions must compete with the best in the world. Hence, the reform agenda set by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is a clear sign that the time is ripe for considering a major restructuring of the education system in India (Balaram, 2010).

Whatever reforms are effected the aim of higher education will be met if and only if the teacher becomes the mentor. Nobel laureate Hans Krebs clearly suggested that it is only a great teacher who can produce a great student. The teacher's role as the one who enthuses a student to think beyond the boundaries of the given text is crucial in shaping the future of education. Unfortunately, in India, we seem to be getting the wrong end of the stick; instead of seeking and selecting great teachers at the academic institutions, we spend endless energies on 'attracting/ enticing' and 'admitting' good students. It is worrying that we are struggling with teacher absenteeism and disinterest in colleges and universities; this needs to be immediately reversed if we are to make any sense of the academic enterprise. (Pandit, 2010). We cannot have teachers who are not fully engaged in the learning process and yet able to deliver quality education. This thought opens the doors of enquiry into the vast domain of work engagement. Work engagement in the education sector has been the subject of research studies conducted in European countries (Hakanen et al., 2006; Bakker et al., 2006) and it is high time that similar studies be conducted in India as well. Hence, the present study aims to investigate the dynamics of work engagement of teachers employed in higher education sector in particular and has the following objectives :

6 The Research Objectives

The following research objectives have been framed on the basis of research gaps identified:

6.1 To measure the level of work engagement amongst the employees (faculty members) working in organizations under the study.

6.2 To identify factors affecting the level of work engagement amongst employees (faculty members).

6.3 To study the relationship (if any) between the level of work engagement amongst employees (faculty members) and

a. job crafting initiatives
b. work - life balance
c. level of work stress
d. level of organization commitment

6.4 To study the relationship (if any) between the level of work engagement and personal variables.

6.5 To identify the measures required for enhancement of work engagement amongst the employees (faculty members).

7 The Research Hypotheses

On the basis of review of literature the following hypotheses have been framed for the present study :

7.1 $\mathbf{H_{0(1)}}$: There is no significant relationship between work engagement level of the employees and their job crafting initiatives.

$\mathbf{H_{a(1)}}$: Employees with higher work engagement take more job crafting initiatives as compared to employees with lower work engagement.

The alternate hypothesis ($\mathbf{H_{a(1)}}$)has been framed on the basis of findings of Wrzesniewski et al. , 1997; Wrzesniewski and Dutton , 2001; Grant and Ashford, 2008; Parker & Ohly, 2008 cited in the review.

7.2 $\mathbf{H_{0(2)}}$: There is no significant relationship between work engagement level of the employees and their work life balance.

$\mathbf{H_{a(2)}}$: Employees with higher work engagement are likely to have a lower work life balance as compared to employees with lower work engagement.

The alternate hypothesis ($\mathbf{H_{a(2)}}$)has been framed on the basis of findings of Pines et al. (1981); Geurts & Demerouti (2003) and Beckers et al. (2004) cited in the review.

7.3 $\mathbf{H_{0(3)}}$: There is no significant relationship between the levels of work engagement and work stress experienced by employees.

$\mathbf{H_{a(3)}}$: Employees with higher work engagement are likely to experience less work stress as compared to employees with lower work engagement.

Relationship between work engagement and psychosomatic health has been studied by Demerouti et al. (2001); Schaufeli and Bakker (2004); Hakanen, Bakker, and Schaufeli (2006); Rothmann and Rothmann (2010). Their findings are the basis of the alternate hypothesis ($\mathbf{H_{a(3)}}$).

7.4 $\mathbf{H_{0(4)}}$: There is no significant relationship between work engagement level of the employees and their organization commitment level.

$\mathbf{H_{a(4)}}$: Employees with higher work engagement are likely to have a high organization commitment as compared to employees with lower work engagement.

The alternate hypothesis ($\mathbf{H_{a(4)}}$)has been framed on the basis of findings of Hayday (2004); Wellins and Concelman (2005) and Saks (2006) cited in the review.

8 Research Design and Methodology

8.1 **Research design** : A survey design has been chosen to reach the research objectives. A cross-sectional design will be used, where a sample is drawn from a population at one time (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997). On the whole the study will be descriptive in nature implying natural observation of the characteristics of the research subject without deliberate manipulation of the variables or control over the settings.

8.2 Survey of secondary sources : In order to get a complete understanding of the concept of work engagement, its operation and implications, secondary data from all possible sources is essential. Most of the literature has been reviewed through books and journals. The secondary data has been helpful in understanding the domain of work engagement, the research work published and the items on its research agenda which gave the most vital strategic direction to the present study.

8.3 The study population : The present study is focused on faculty members employed in higher education institutions. Higher education covers many disciplines. For the sake of feasibility and economy the scope of the study has been narrowed down to

specific domains of higher education programs and study will be limited to selected districts of Punjab and the union territory of Chandigarh.

The present study would cover the following important domains of higher education:

i. Commerce and Business Management
ii. Science, Engineering and Technology
iii. Applied Medical Sciences
iv. Education and Humanities

8.4 Sampling technique and sample size : Since higher education is very diverse in terms of its offerings, for the purpose of this study Higher Education Institutions have been divided into 4 categories (refer 8.3). The employees (faculty members / teachers) falling in each category do have different backgrounds but their basic professional goals are quite similar. For the purpose of better representation, quota sampling technique will be followed to draw the sample. The respondents will be drawn from all the four categories of higher education taking an appropriate representation from each category. The sample will consist of approximately 500 respondents well spread into all categories.

As far as the regional scope of the sample is concerned, respondents will be drawn higher education institutions located in the districts of Jalandhar, Amritsar, Patiala, Ludhiana and the union territory of Chandigarh. These districts have been chosen as they are the hubs of higher education in this region. Each of the districts has at least one University Campus in its jurisdiction.

8.5 The Research Instrument : Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire to be designed for fulfilling each of the objectives. Utrecht Work Engagement Scale developed by Schaufeli et al (2002) will be used for measuring work engagement. For all other parameters standardized scales will be used (wherever available) and additional scales will be developed and their validity and reliability will be tested.

8.6 Administration of the instrument : In order to reach out to the respondents suitable communication channels would be used depending upon their physical location. Data would be collected through personal visits, personal e-mails, e-mails on professional

networking sites, intranet of different organizations with their due permission and a website can be created especially for the purpose of seeking response to the questionnaires.

8.7 Statistical Analysis : The filled in questionnaires will be checked for completeness and then analyzed with the help of SPSS. On the basis of literature reviewed it seems that Factor Analysis can be used for arriving at the set of distinct factors affecting work engagement. For comparing whether work engagement level varies significantly across various groups of respondents classified according to the personal variables, z-test and MANOVA will be used. Other suitable statistical techniques will be used according to the scales used in the data collection instrument.

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